

A
DISCOURSE

Explaining the
Nature of Edification.

BOTH OF
Particular Persons in Private Graces,
AND OF
The Church in Unity and Peace.

And shewing
That we must not break Unity and Publick Peace,
for supposed Means of better Edifying
in Private Virtues.

IN A
VISITATION SERMON

At *COVENTRY*, May 7. 1684.

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L O N D O N,
Printed for *Robert Kettlewell* at the *Hand and Scepter*
over against *St. Dunstons Church* in *Fleetstreet*.
MDCLXXXIV.

THE PREFACE.

E *Edification, as applied to the whole Body, is in Scripture-Notion the Uniting of the Church; but now by a very unhappy, tho' a very common Mistake, it is made the great Pretence for Dividing it. For that wherein our Dissenting Brethren hope to shelter themselves in forsaking us, is their Edifying more in Separate Congregations. This is thought a Good Answer to all Laws requiring Communion with the Parish-Churches; for no Law, they think, can hinder them from Edifying, and saving their own Souls: and a sufficient Reason for their rejecting of any Imposed Pastors; which they fancy are not to be appointed by the Will of the Patron, or the Prescription of the Church, but by every Mans own Choice, because no other is so much concerned for his Edification, as he himself is. To remove this Cause of Separation, some Worthy* Persons have taken very Pious and Profitable Pains, in shewing how unjust the Charge of an Unedifying Ministry is upon our Church, and how partial they are in ascribing more Edification to their Meetings. And if our Brethren will peruse what they have said with impartial Minds, and see this, as they may if they will lay aside all Prejudice, there will be no need of saying any more to satisfy them in this Business. But if after all they will be Judges themselves where they Edifie most, and in their Judgment prefer their own Ministers: yet still there is enough to withhold them from Separation on this account, because they are to edifie and build up the Church of God as well as themselves,*

* See a Discourse of Profiting by Sermons: and another Of Edification.

The Preface.

themselves, and must not break the Publick Unity and Peace to carry on their own Profiting in Private Graces. And therefore, referring them to the forementioned Discourses (whose Principal Design I think that is) to convince them that their Assemblies are not more, and ours less Edifying: in that part of this Sermon which concerns this Case, I have applied my self more expressly to those who shall still be unconvinced, and think they are: and shewn them, that supposing, what indeed is otherwise, that among them Particular Men have better Means of Edification, yet will not the search of that warrant them to divide the Church, and betake themselves to Separation.

And as it will not justify the People in Hearing: so, which is the only thing I shall add further, much less will it justify their Ministers in Preaching in a Separate Meeting. For the Preachers are not less, but more obliged than the People are, to edifie the Church of God in the first place. And whatever Necessity they may think lies upon them to Preach the Gospel; in Places where there are no other Preachers: yet where there are, (and our Brethren will not deny there are store of Sound, and Profitable ones among us,) the Care of Edifying the whole Church ought surely to restrain them from breaking Unity by Preaching, and from drawing Men off from hearing us, only in Hopes they may Profit more by joyning with themselves. The Duty, and the Desire, (as of reaping greater Profit themselves, so) of ministering to the greater Profit of any other Particular Christians, must stop, as this Discourse shews, in Peaceable ways. And therefore till our Brethren can Conform; and preserve Unity under their Preaching; they ought to be silent, as the Old Peaceable Nonconformists were, and quietly suffer the People to be taught by others; and not exercise their Ministry out of any Hopes of doing more Good with it to their Particular Hearers, when thereby they must cast off the Authority of their Lawful Superiors, and make a Rent and Division in the Church.

I COR. XIV. 12.

—*Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church.*

THis Rule is here laid down in the Case of *Extraordinary and Miraculous Gifts*, such as *Propheſie* or *Inſpired Preaching*, *Tongues*, *Miracles*, and the like, which the *Corinthians* zealouſly coveted, to amuſe Beholders, and get themſelves a Name, more than to Do Good with them to others, and Edifie their Brethren. But it is equally applicable to all *Ordinary Gifts*, and *Natural or Acquired Endowments*, as *prompt and penetrating Wit*, *clear Underſtanding*, *ſound Judgment*, *Prudence in Conduſt*, *Fluent and Elegant Speech*, and the like: for God's Deſign is the ſame in both; he entruſts us with them, not to feed Vanity, and only ſeek Praise to our ſelves, but to Profit and Edifie our Neighbours. And as it holds in all ſorts, either of *Natural*, or *Miraculous Gifts*; ſo alſo in all *Places and Offices*, which make room for the Exerciſe and Employment of them. For as Edification is here made the End of all Gifts and Abilities; ſo is it elſewhere of all Offices and Dignities in the Church. God gave ſome, *Apoſtles*; and ſome, *Prophets*; and ſome, *Evangelists*; and ſome, *Paſtors and Teachers*; for the *Perſecting of the Saints*, and the *Edifying of the Body of Chriſt*, Eph. 4. 11, 12. So that *Edification* is the Great End of all thoſe Gifts wherewith God endows Men, and of all thoſe Stations and Capacities whereto he calls them to ſhew their Gifts in. It is the main thing, which all are to ſeek and propoſe to themſelves in all opportunities, either of doing, or receiving Good. Forasmuch as ye are zealous of *Spiritual Gifts*, *ſeek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church.*

In Diſcourſing upon theſe Words, I ſhall,

First, *Explain the Nature of Edification, and ſhew what Improvements it implies.*

Secondly, *Preſs it as the Great Point whereat they are to aim, on all ſorts of Chriſtians.*

B

First,

First, I shall *explain the Nature of Edification, and shew what Improvements it implies.* And this well deserves to be distinctly and clearly stated, both for its *own sake*, because God has made it the Prime End whereto all Mens Parts and Opportunities are to be directed; and also for the *Churches*, because the lamentable Divisions, that have so long prey'd upon the Vitals of Religion, and the Bowels of this Church, are in great part owing to Mens Mistakes about it. For one of the Commonest, and, I think, of the most Specious Pretences our Dissenting Brethren give for their leaving our Parish-Churches, is that *they Edifie and Profit more in their Private Meetings.* If this Pretence were true, it seems very plausible. For *St. Paul* directs all Men to make Edification their Aim in these things, and it seems to argue a great Goodness, and a great Wisdom; and so to be most commendable in any Man, to desire to be better'd by all the Prayers he uses, and every Sermon which he hears. And whether it be true or no, they think they are fittest to judge, and that no other Persons are so able to tell them what Prayers and Sermons they are most benefited by, as from their own Experience they are able to tell themselves. And therefore, fancying it is for their greater growth in Grace and Edification, they take heart, and think no Good Man, who knows how bad he is at best, and is careful to grow as good as he can, will blame them for it, to break the Unity of the Church, and joyn themselves to Separate Congregations. Whereas, were they truly inform'd in the Scripture-Notion of Edification, they would see clearly that there can be no Pretence of Edifying in a *Schism*, and that supposing in some Respects, they could edifie more, as they say, by their own Preachers, yet would not that authorize them to make a Rent in the Church, and separate from us.

• *Edification in Scripture-sense is the same as Benefiting or Profiting. A Neighbour, as St. Paul notes, is Edified, when he is pleased to his Good, Rom. 15. 2: and strange Tongues, he says, do not edifie the Church, because they do not profit it. 1 Cor. 14. 5, 6. So that by our being Edified in Religion, is meant our Profiting and advancing in it; when we attain, either some Particulars which before we wanted, or more Strength and Firmness in those we have already. The Reason why this Benefiting in Religion is call'd Edifying, is because both every Private Christian, and the Whole Church, is compared in Scripture to a Building.*

Sometimes *Particular Christians* are called the *Temple of God.* Know ye not, says *St. Paul*, that your *Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost?*

Ghost? which is spoken of Particular Persons. 1 Cor. 6. 19: and again, *What agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols?* 2 Cor. 6. 16. *The Temple of God*, i. e. a believing Husband; *with Idols*, i. e. with an unbelieving Wife who worships Idols, that being plainly the Case there treated of v. 14, 15.

And at other times, which is the most general use, the *Whole Church* or Community of Christians is styled so. The Church is called the * *House of God*, — in the *House of God*, saith the Apostle, which is the Church. 1 Tim. 3. 15. 'Tis call'd his Temple — *Ye are the Temple of God*, and the Spirit of God dwells in or † among you, as it did in the Temple among the Jews. 1 Cor. 3. 16: and his Building — *Ye*, i. e. the Church of Corinth, are God's Building, 1 Cor. 3. 9; and the Church of Jews and Gentiles mention'd Eph. 2. 19, is call'd the Building fitly framed, that grows into an holy Temple in the Lord, builded for an Habitation of God thro the Spirit. v. 20, 21, 22.

And this Application of it to both these, is well noted by Theophylact. * The Temple of God, says he, is a Title given in common, both to the Church or Collection of all the Faithful, and to every Private Christian. And because in Scripture-Language, both the Whole Church, and Particular Christians, are thus call'd God's Building; pursuant to that Metaphor, the adding and laying together those Excellencies that are to integrate either the Whole Body or any Good Man, or the giving Strength and Firmness to them, is call'd Edification.

Now in explaining this Profiting and Spiritual Edification, I shall shew

1. Wherein lies the Edification of Particular Men and Private Christians; and that is in any Growth or Improvement, either in Faith, or Manners.

2. Wherein lies the Edification of the Whole Church; and that is mainly in the settled Peace and Union of its Members.

3. That this latter is to be preferr'd, and must give Laws and Limitations to all Means of promoting the former: So that no Man must ever seek to edifie in Schism, or break the Peace of a confessedly Sound and Lawful Church, upon pretence that he can edifie more in Separate Meetings.

1. I shall shew whertin lies the Edification of Particular Men and Private Christians; and that is in any Growth or Improvement, either in Faith, or Manners. This Benefiting of Particular Men, is one sort of Edification the Scripture speaks of. He that prophesies,

saith St. Paul, *Speaketh unto men to edification, i. e. to the benefit of every one that hears him. 1 Cor. 14. 3. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, i. e. to improve your Brethren as you converse with them. Eph. 4. 29. And let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification, i. e. to profit him in Religion. Rom. 15. 2.* In these, and other Places, the Edification spoken of is that of Particular Men and Private Christians, when they are any ways furthered and assisted in those Things, which may please God, and save their Souls.

Now Religion consisting of two Great Parts, *Faith*, and *Obedience*; the Spiritual Profiting and Edification of every Man, must consist in his being any ways assisted, encouraged, or improved in either of these Duties. So that then every Person is edified, when his Life and Practice is any thing amended, or his Knowledge of Religious Matters is more clear and perfect, or his Belief of them more firm and settled, or his Affections for them more fervent, or his holy Resolutions and the Religious bent of his Heart more unalterably establish'd, or his Conscience more freed from Doubts, or fuller of Comfort and Joy in God, than it was before.

1. The chief Instance of any Particular Mans Edification, and that which, indeed, is the End of all the rest, is *when his Life and Practice is any thing amended.* And thus 'tis, when he is more Devout and relign'd to God, more Just and Charitable to all Men, more Humble, Temperate, and Mortified to this World, or improved in any other Parts of Good Life and Conversation. When he gains more Virtues, or gets a greater Degree of Constancy and Firmness in them, having fewer Escapes, and standing in harder Trials, and doing his Duty with more delight and easiness, than he was wont to do. This Amendment of Life is one way of Edifying. For St. Paul says of *Church-Censures*, whose End is Reformation of Manners, that they are *given for edification*, 2 Cor. 13. 10; and of *vain Questions and Disputes*, which make none the better Livers, that they do *not minister to godly edifying*, i. e. to Edification in Godliness, 1 Tim. 1. 4. Yea, it is the principal point, and the main thing in Edification. For the Religion of a Good Life is that which, thro the Merits and Grace of Christ, must save us all at last, and which God will *look at in the Day of Judgment. It is the very End and Accomplishment of Faith and Knowledge, for by *Works*, as St. James saith, *Faith is made perfect. Jam. 2. 22.* It is the Casting Point, and the One thing necessary in

in Religion; so that when Men seek to edifie in Religion, they must seek above all to be better'd and improved in Holy Living.

And when they seek to be edified in an Holy Life, that must not only be in some Parts and Virtues, but in the whole Compass and Extent of it. With Zeal for God, they must joyn Charity to their Neighbours, yea, even to their Enemies, and Men of most opposite Opinions. With a serious owning of Religion, Sobriety, and Temperance, they must joyn a Peaceable Temper, and Submission to their Governours. And with Obedience to the Higher Powers, and the Decency and Heartiness of Devotions, they must joyn all the Duties of Morality, of a sober and just Practice. This I note, because the World is generally prone to measure their Edifying in Religion, by their Edifying only in some Particulars: nay, alas! many times by their Edifying only in the Beloved Notes of a Party, whilst they are altogether barren and unprofitable, in the Broad Lines, and Great Instances of Morality. When a loose and debauch'd Man, for instance, shews himself a Favourer of the Dissenters, and espouses their Schism; how ready are several among them, and perhaps he himself is not the last in believing them, to cry him up for a Saint, and a Precious Person? And again, if a licentious wicked Liver shew a Zeal for the Churches Service, and for Submission to the King, (which are things as truly Good, as the other by mistake are supposed to be) how apt are others to overlook all his Vices, and, as if these were not only some, but all Vertues, to set him up for a Right Good Man. When any thing Men count a Part of Religion is opposed, and they are put more concernedly to espouse and contend for it; because others unworthily sleight it, they fall oft-times too much to magnifie, and place all Religion in it, and judge themselves or others to be Religious from it alone, whilst in other things they are irreligiously Wicked. They magnifie on all hands the things wherein they oppose each others, and make them the chief Notes of Virtue, and of the Religion of Persons. So that the Religion of a Good Life is too often drown'd in the Particular Notes and Virtues of a Party, and so long as a Man is true to their Side, he passes for a Good Man, whether in the wide Compass of other Duties he be true or false to Almighty God.

But these Particular and Partial Notes are not the Standard of Edification, nor the way to measure our Improvement in Religion by. If we take any one particular Grace and Vertue, it is but one thing, not all Religion, and so is but one Part, not the Whole
of

of Edification. All the Duties of Good Life are equally Parts of Christianity, and all necessary to our Salvation: and therefore as it is, and ought to be our Duty and Aim, to explain, and press; so is it the Duty, and ought to be the Aim and Care of all our People, to learn and practice, and then they must judge themselves to edifie rightly, when they profit and improve in all of them.

2. A second Instance of Particular Mens Edification, is when their *Knowledge of Religious Matters is more clear and perfect*, or their *Faith and Belief of them is more firmly settled*. And thus the *Apostle* tells us, that *Prophecie or Preaching* edifies, because it instructs and convinces Mens Understandings, and so improves Faith and Knowledge. *He that prophesies*, says he, *speaks unto men to edification*, 1 Cor. 14. 3; he edifies those that hear him, because they are *taught*, and *convinced* by him. v. 19. 24. Whereas, on the contrary, *strange Tongues*, he says, are very *unedifying*, because *no man understands them*. v. 2. 4.

And thus again a Man is edified in Religion, when he is any ways improved in Light and Conviction, when he more clearly and fully understands the Doctrines and Duties of it, or is more undoubtedly persuaded of them. And this Improvement in Belief and Knowledge, he must not measure so much by the *Number*, as by the *Weight and Usefulness* of Particulars. It is no Edification at all, or next to none, to load our Understandings with an heap of nice, curious, and unprofitable things; to lose our selves in searching into Mysteries; to hunt after Conjectures, and scan doubtful Questions, about Angels, and the State of Separate Souls, and the Time of the Worlds ending, and Gods Secret Will and Decrees, which are not necessary for us to know, and which perhaps no Man will be able to decide till God determine them. These things make us no better, nor holier. For nice Disputes, and curious Conjectures, and airy Notions, never strike down a Lust, or correct a Sin: they are light things that swim at top, and float only in the Brain, but never sink down into the Heart, or reform the Life of any Man. And since our Heart and Life is not made better by them, they are very unedifying. For the End of all Faith and Knowledge, is to guide, and improve Good Life and Practice; so that then we truly edifie in our Understandings, when we learn things of weight and use, that are like to affect our Hearts, and direct, stir up, and help us on in the Course of a Godly Conversation. And thus it is, when we are instructed in the Great Articles of our *Creed*, about Almighty God, and Jesus Christ, and the
Future

Future Judgment, &c. and fully persuaded of them: When we are enlightned in all the Points of *Practice*, discerning plainly what is the Nature of all Particular Duties, and what is implied in them, and what Means are like to help us most in attaining of them, and what are the most powerful Motives and Encouragements to quicken our Care and Endeavours after them. When we are clearly informed in the Nature of Repentance, and in the Readiness of God's Spirit and Grace to help on all our Good Endeavours, and in any other things, whereon either our Growth in Grace, or Peace of Conscience depends, and which are either necessary Parts, or helpful Means, or prevalent Motives to Obedience. Our Minds, I say, are best edified, when they are stored with such useful things.

Especially, which is the only thing I will add further, if they have an *usefull knowledge* of them; i.e. if they know them by *Plain and Clear Accounts*, and not under a Dress of *obscure Phrases*, and *Allegorical Descriptions*. For some Christians, especially among our Separating Brethren, think they are much edified in Spiritual knowledge, when they have learn'd to talk much about *Christ*, or *Grace*, or the *Spirit*, or *Faith*, or *Regeneration*, or other most important Points, in dark Phrases, and far-fetch'd, and, very oft, improper Metaphors, and affected Allegories, which are very unfit for Definitions of things, and are not a way to improve and Clear, but Darken Knowledge. And when men are improved only in such mysterious Speeches, which, though they may excite some good Affection, yet, I presume, can give no clear Apprehensions to their own minds, since they are very puzzling when others, even the wisest, come to examine them: I think they cannot give them a Claim to any extraordinary Edification. For many fine Figures, and pretty Allegories may be used in setting off a thing, and yet there shall not be much knowledge in them. They amuse the mind with pleasing Ideas, and strike the fancy with lucky hints whilst they are recited; but they give us no just Apprehension of the thing, and upon examination, a man shall find himself little the wiser, or more able to explain it unto others, after he has heard them.

3. A *Third Instance* of Particular mens Edification, is when their *Affections for Religious matters are made more Fervent*, or their *holy Purposes are more unalterably fix'd and established*. This exercise and increase of Religious Affection, and Godly Resolution, is another way of edifying. And so St. Paul says of him that *speaks in the Church in an unknown Tongue, that he edifies himself*, i.e. in Devout

vout Prayers and Affections, (for such Enthusiasms were ordinarily express'd in Prayer and Praise — he that speaks in an unknown tongue, speaks not unto men, but unto God. v. 2. 1 Cor. 14. 4. And profitable communication, which ministers Grace, i.e. a Gracious bent of Heart and Good Affection, to the Hearers, he says is good to the use of edifying. Eph. 4. 29. And their comforting or * exhorting themselves together, to be Firm and Resolute in the Faith of Christ, amidst all the Dangers and Persecutions which then environed it, he tells the Thessalonians is the way to edifie one another. 1 Thes. 5. 11.

Good Resolution is the very Strength and Vigor of the Soul, which prepares it for Tryals; putting it upon all the Pains, and enabling it to conquer all the Difficulties in Religion. So that then we are mightily confirm'd in any Graces, when we are more resolute, and bent upon them. Especially, if this Resolution be not a rash Act, made hastily in some Religious heat, but the Effect of serious and due Consideration: as it is, when we foresee the Pains, and Self-denials we are to undergo in any Duties; but yet, being fully convinced of the perfect Reasonableness, the absolute Necessity, and the incomparable Advantage of them, we absolutely resolve upon them notwithstanding.

And Fervor of Desire and Devout Affection, will enable us more chearfully, and strongly to resolve upon any Good thing. It will make us careful and intent to please God, and ready to deny our selves for his sake, and give us not only Ease, but Pleasure and Delight in well-doing; it being natural for Men to be inwardly satisfied when they have what is desired, and take delight in things, when once they have an affection for them. So that then also we are furthered and edified in any Graces, when we are stirr'd up to a greater quickness in devout Affections, and find in our selves more ardent Desires, and a higher Passion for them. Especially, if these Affections were kindled in us, not only by pleasing Similitudes, and pretty Sayings, or solemn Looks, or melting Tones, or the Preacher's Passion and Vehemence; but by the Weight and awakening Force of the Reasons and Things themselves, which touch'd our Hearts, either when they came from him, or afterwards when we reflect and dwell upon them in our own Meditations. If we are put into a Religious Heat and good Affection, only by Voice, and Vehemence, and the Shew and Solemnities of Action: that, indeed, is something if a Wise Man have the government of it, who will apply it to the embettering of his Life, and fix and fortifie his holy Resolution whilst that

that Religious Heat is upon him. Tho, I confess, if he stops in the Affection, and doth not take advantage thereby to be thus resolv'd; he is much more pleas'd than profited with it, and gains not much of Edification. But when the Conviction of our Understandings goes along with this Agitation of our Fancies in the affecting of our Hearts, and we are struck by considering the Greatness of the Motives, and the Weight of the Things: then we have such an holy Affection, as is much more strong and lasting, and more apt to edifie us. When only Voice and Vehemence begot the Affection in us, a very small time will wear it off, as they wear out of our Fancies, which they will quickly do of themselves, or thro' our Fancy's being diverted and taken up with other things. But when the Weight of Things and Arguments affected us: those are embodied into our Minds and Judgments, and so are like to stay with us; and also mightily startle and convince our Consciences, and so are like to have great power over us. These Convictions are both *Potent*, and *Durable* things, which greatly affect us for the present, and stick by us to affect us equally when we reflect upon them at any time afterwards.

4. A *Fourth Instance* of Particular Mens Edification, is when their Consciences are more freed from Doubts, and Scruples, and are fuller of Comfort and Joy in God, than they were before. And thus the weak Brother's being confirm'd in Conscience (tho that was in a wrong case) and emboldened, St. Paul calls his being edified. If any see thee, who hast knowledge, sit at meat in the Idols Temple; shall not the Conscience of him that is weak, i. e. scruples it, be emboldened (the word is *edified, i. e. made to lay aside his Doubts and Fears by the Authority of thy Example) and eat also? 1 Cor. 8. 10. *οχι ουκ*.

Vexatious Scruples and distrustful Fears, are the Pain and Sickness, the Swoonings and Faintings of a Religious Soul. They are a heavy Burden to it, putting it into great Uneasiness, Horror, and Disquietude: and also a great hindrance; for by disheartning they beget a Feebleness and break its Strength, they keep its Thoughts and Intention employ'd mainly upon themselves, which are things that do not profit, and detain them from making a progress in those which are truly good. And since Doubts and Despondencies are so truly a Disease and Unhappiness to our Spirits, and so great a Discouragement and Stop to all Religious Service and Improvements; it must needs

be an high part of Edification to be clearly resolv'd about Practical Cases, and to have Peace of Mind upon safe Grounds, and well-satisfied Consciences. So that then our Souls are much edified, when our Doubts are clear'd, and our Consciences truly resolv'd and comforted. And thus it is, when they are loaded with a just sense of necessary things, and freed from the vexation of needless Scruples; when they are better satisfied, either about their *Duty*, being resolv'd whether some Doubtful Cases are either allowed or forbid by some Laws; or about the *Safety of their State*, being satisfied upon good Grounds of God's Favour and Acceptance, which will give them Peace and Joy in God, and comfortable Expectations.

And thus we see wherein lies the Edification of *Particular Men* and *Private Christians*, viz. in *any Confirmation or Improvement, either of Faith or Manners*. So that then a Private Person may know himself to be edified, when he gathers strength, and improves in the practice of any, or of all Virtues; when he thrives in plain, and clear Understanding and Belief, especially of weighty and useful Things; when he is more fervent in Godly Affections, chiefly if they are accompanied with Convictions of Reason, and rais'd by powerful Arguments; when he is more unalterably fixed in virtuous, and holy Resolutions; more satisfied in Practical Cases, and Doubts of Conscience; or more comforted with Joy in God, and the Hopes of Eternal Happiness.

I proceed now

2. To shew wherein lies the Edification of the *Whole Church*, and that is mainly in the settled Peace and Union of its Members.

Edification in the Scriptures doth Principally, and most commonly refer to the *whole Church*. For it, as I have noted, is most usually styled, and most properly resembled to a Building, since it contains in it such a Number of Particulars, which, as so many *live Stones*, as St. Peter says, are built into this *Spiritual House*. 1. Pet. 2. 5. And this Edification of the Church, or Body of Christians, is spoken of by St. Paul in the Text—*Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the Church: and so again to the Ephesians—Christ gave Apostles and Prophets, &c. for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ.* Eph. 2. 11, 12.

Now this edifying of the *whole Church*, lies mainly in the settled
Peace

Peace and Union of its Members; and the Great instrument of that is Love, which makes us look, not altogether at our own things, but at the things of others.

1. *The edification of the whole Church, I say, lies mainly in the settled Peace and Union of its Members.* The Church indeed is edified in the edification of its particular Members, when they grow in Faith and Manners; because it is not barely a *Body of Men*, but a *Body of Men professing Faith and Holiness*, so that then it is perfected and improved, when they grow in these Virtues. And so those Gifts which were most instructing, and most apt to improve Knowledge and Good Life, as *Prophecy*; are said here to be more for the edification of the Church, than other Gifts less instructing, as *Tongues*. But the edification peculiar to it as it is *one Body*, and a *Church*, is the *Peace and Union of its Members*. For Peace and Unity edifies and builds up, as Separation and Division dissolves and plucks asunder all Societies. The laying together and cementing Wood and Stones builds up, as the dividing and scattering them abroad pulls down a House; and so do Unity, or Division, build up, or destroy all Communities. *A House, or City divided against it self, says our Saviour, shall not stand; and every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation. Mat. 12. 25.* So that the edification of the Church, which consists of such a vast number of Members, is the keeping and establishing them in Unity and Peace, and nothing is more opposite to edifying, than Schisms and Divisions. *St. Jude opposes Edification to Separation. These be they, who separate themselves—but, contrary to that, Ye Beloved, building up yourselves on your most Holy Faith, &c. intimating, that to edifie or build up, they must forbear to Separate. Jude v. 19. 20.* *St. Luke* says the Churches were edified, when they ceased to be Persecuted and Dispersed, and were suffered to be settled and united. *Then, says he, had the Churches rest, throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified. Acts 9. 31.* where by *Edified*, I think we may well understand their being settled in Peace, and established; not only, because their *Rest* is given as the reason of it, to intimate that then they were edified when they were no longer scattered; but also because the *increase in Grace and Spiritual Comfort* (the other meaning of Edification) is mentioned besides and added to it—*were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. v. 31.*

And St. Paul says the Church edifies it self, not only when by the supply of all the Parts there is an *increase in Goodness*, but when moreover it preserves *Unity*, and the *Whole Body is compacted* by what every part supplies: So that Edification must imply Unity and Compactness in the Body, as well as other instances of Personal and Private Virtue. From Christ, says he, the whole Body *sicly joyned together, and compacted by that which every joint supplies, makes increase of the Body unto the edifying of it self.* Eph. 4. 16.

Thus in the *Scripture Notion* doth the Edification of the Church consist in the *Unity, Peace, and Compactness* of its Members. And this St. Paul plainly teaches, when he exhorts to *Follow after the things which make for Peace*, because it is with them we must *edify one another.* Rom. 14. 19. And when he ascribes Edification to *Charity*, that Great Bond of Peace and Union--'tis *Charity*, says he, *that Edifies,* 1 Cor. 8. 1. And thus Theophylact

† πῶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ, ταῦτέστι πάντες οἱ πρὸς συναρμολογούμενοι καὶ ἐνέμενοι. Theoph. in Eph. 2. v. 22.

* ἡ γνῶσις βλάπτει φουτῶσαι καὶ ὀγκῶσαι τὴν ἔχοντα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἀπορρίπτει αὐτὸν καὶ πληροῖ μέλους ἐὰν μὴ καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην ἔχη μετ' ἐαυτοῦ, ὥστε ἀγάπην τὴν παντίαν οἰκοδομεῖν διώκων. Theoph. in 1 Cor. 8. 1.

well explains the *Scripture Notion.* † *The Building*, says he, *that is, all the Faithful compacted and united into one Body*: So that in his Sense the Church is then Built up, when it is compacted and united. And again, * *Knowledge without Charity puffs up and swells, and by that means divides from other Members, and makes a Schism: Whereas, on the contrary, Charity edifies (opposing Edification to Separation) i. e. maintains Union.*

2. And The great instrument of this Peace and Union is Love, which makes us look, not altogether at our own Things, but at the Things of others. If Men seek only themselves, and will use nothing but what seems best to their own Fancies, and works most upon their own Humours and Affections, it is not possible there should be Peace and Unity in any Church. For there is almost as great a diversity in Fancies and Affections, especially about lesser matters, as there is in Faces; and it is never to be expected, that, in such cases, all Men should like and approve of the same things, more than that all Palates should be pleas'd with the same Meats and Sauces. So that whilst every Man will please himself, and gratifie his own Humour, there is not like to be any Union and Edification of the Church. But that which works this Peace and Union, must be Love of others.

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The Body increases, saith St. Paul, by the supply from every Part, so the edifying of it self in Love. Eph. 4. 16. And whereas Knowledge puffs up, and cares not though we lose others; Charity, says he, edifies, i. e. preserves Peace in the Church, and keeps together all its Members. 1 Cor. 8. 1. † The Members of Christ, saith St. Austin, are coupled to each other by the Charity of Union, it being Love which unites them; and by the same Charity they cohere to Christ their head too. 'Tis Love that is the Publick-spirited Virtue, which, as the Apostle says, seeks not her own, 1 Cor. 13. 5; and carries us to deny our selves out of care and kindness for our Brethren. And this care of others is the only thing, which can maintain Unity, and prevent Schism. The Members must have the same care one of another, saith St. Paul, that there be no Schism in the Body. 1 Cor. 12. 25.

† --Unde utique manifestum est, eum, qui non est in membris Christi; Christianam salutem habere non posse. Membra vero Christi per unitatis charitatem sibi copulantur, & per eandem capiti suo coherent, quod est Christus Jesus. Aug. de Unit. Eccl. contra Ep. Petil. Donat. c. 2.

And thus also it appears wherein lies the Edification of the whole Church, namely, in the settled Peace and Unity of all its Members. For the Church, being a Spiritual House, is edified and built up by Unity and Peace, but plucked down and broke to pieces by Divisions and Separations. And this Peace and Unity is not to be had whilst we all seek to please our selves, but only by Love, which is a self-denying Virtue, and the care of others.

And thus having explained both the Edification of particular Men in Faith and Manners, and of the whole Church in the settled Peace and Unity of all its Members: I proceed in the

3. And last Place, to shew that this latter is to be preferr'd, and must give Laws and Limitations to all means of promoting the former: So that no man must ever seek to edifie in Schism, or break the Peace of a confessedly sound and Lawful, much less of an excellent and very edifying Church, upon Pretence that he can edifie more in separate Meetings.

The latter of these, I say, is to be preferr'd, and must give Laws to all means of promoting the former, and particular Mens using any ways, or seeking any helps to edifie in particular Graces, must always be in subordination to the Unity and Edification of the Church.

As for all the Duties of Christianity, they are bound to them absolutely, and no care of maintaining Peace and Unity must ever draw them to forego them. So that when any Sins are required

quired in any Church as the Conditions of Communion, as *A-doration of the Host, Worship of Images, and Profession of false Articles* are in the Church of Rome, though thereby they break the Peace and Unity of that particular Church, yet must every private Christian stand out, and not comply with them. For such Peace with that particular Church upon such corrupt terms, were nothing less than entering into a Conspiracy, both against the Universal Church which disclaims these Corruptions, and against Jesus Christ the Head of it, seeing it is upon Conditions expressly forbid by his Laws.

But when all these Doctrines and Duties of Christianity are left free, nay, openly taught and pressed on all men, which in Truth is, and our Brethren confess to be our Case: then, as for all the helps and outward opportunities of improving them, as *what Prayers they shall use, and what Sermons they shall hear*, and such like; these must give way to publick ends, and be subordinate to the Churches edification. To use the best Prayers, and hear the best Sermons, and be under the most edifying Helps, are very desirable things indeed; and he is very careless of his own Soul, who, when he wants them, doth not seek them if they may be had; and unthankful to Almighty God, if he doth not prize and value them when he is placed under them. But when we desire, and, in all Peaceable ways, endeavour to have as good as we can; we must at the same time be content to take up with such as we may have, and not separate and divide the Church to find better. We may be sensible of the want, and of our great unhappiness under a less edifying means in any Church, when that is truly the Case (though, God be thanked, however our Brethren mistake it, it is not so with us) and both wish and fairly endeavour to remove the unhappiness. But when we are sensible of them, and wish they were removed, we must not fall into Schism to remove them, nor break the Peace and Unity of the Church for better means of private edification.

To evince this, I observe,

1. *If a Man breaks Unity and publick Peace for better means of private Profiting, he cannot be said so much as to improve in private Edification.*

If we allow all Men to reject the established means, which stand by publick Wisdom, and to chuse any which they fancy better at their own Discretion; they will not be likely to chule
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such as are really more edifying. I know 'tis Natural for Men to think well of themselves, and that, unless they are wise, they will be apt to fancy he undervalues them, who would beget in them an humble Opinion of their own Judgments.* But in truth the generality of Men are unmeet, and ill Judges in these things; so that to set them free from the publick means, and bid them chuse better for themselves, is not the way to put them under such as are more profitable for them. For some would still be changing for *varieties* sake, not to have a more *useful*, but a *New Man*: it being the Property of itching Ears, as well as of wanton Appetites, to be cloy'd with the best Entertainments when they are held to them, and never to like of any thing long. And others would think to edifie *more*, by those which really are *less* edifying. They would too often chuse to themselves a Pastor, either from his Gesture and Actions, the cadence of his Voice, his Zeal and Vehemence; or from his abounding in affecting Phrases, and taking Similitudes; or from his Preaching pleasing things, and insisting most on their beloved Opinions: and for their sakes reject others, who treat of more useful and weighty matters, and lay out the great Points of Religion in all plainness, and speak more to Mens Consciences, whose Discourses, though less pleasing, perhaps, to some Fancies, are yet I am sure the more profitable Sermons. The greatest number of Hearers are observed to be very injudicious in their choice and applause of Teachers, and to prefer those who can do them less good, before such as are really fitted to do more. This is observed by men of the best esteem among our Brethren, as well as by others amongst us. And 'tis no wonder it should be so observable of other Hearers, when the *Apostle* tell us the very same of the *Corinthians* in his own case. He was qualified, sure, in all respects, as one of the most Powerful and Edifying Teachers, and the *Corinthians* had known him well enough to see it, and believe so of him. But yet, such Judges were several among them, of edifying Preaching, as to prefer others before him, and desire rather to be under their Ministry than his, which put him upon speaking so much in his own Praise, as he doth 2 Cor. 11. and c. 12. So that, if all Men were

+ It grieves my very Soul to think, what pitiful, raw, and ignorant kind of Preaching is crowded most after in many places, for the mere affectionate manner of expression, and loudness of the Preachers voice. How oft have I known the ablest Preachers undervalued, and an ignorant man by Crowds applauded, when I that have been acquainted with the Preacher ab incunabulis, have known him to be unable well to answer most Questions in the common catechism? Mr. Baxter Cure of Ch. Divis. p. 215.

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And again--The worlds experience puts it past doubt, that the generality of the Vulgar, Unlearned and Injudicious sort of men, do value a man by his Tone and Voice, more than for the Judgment and excellency of his matter, if not put off by such Advantage. 1d. Defence of Cure Ch. Divis. p. 108, 109. Also Hildersgh. Lett. 58. on Jo. 4. p. 270.

set loose from the means appointed by publick Wisdom, and were left to chuse better for themselves; since the generality are such unfit Judges in this case, they would not ordinarily chuse such means, as would more profit them.

But if they were all so wise, as to fix on proper means, and, when they reject the established helps, chuse such instead of them as really are more edifying; yet if they break the publick Peace to come at them, they cannot account themselves

to improve in private Edification. If a Man breaks Peace to improve in Knowledge, he loses more than he gets; for in Christianity Love is better than Learning, and a peaceable Temper in the Eyes of God of higher Price, than a skillful Understanding. *Covet earnestly the best Gifts* (among which Prophecie and Knowledge must have † Preference) *and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way to be coveted beyond all of them, viz. the way of Charity, which he begins there to treat of.* 1 Cor. 12. 31. If he dissolves Unity and incurs Schism, to profit better in some other Duties of a Christian; he takes a very mistaken course, since Love and Unity are most especially recommended, and are the very chief of them. *If it be possible, and as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.* Rom. 12. 18. *Above all things, my Brethren, put on Charity, which is the very bond of perfectness, i. e. most perfect in it self, and that which perfects all other Virtues.* Col. 3. 14. *And above all things have fervent Charity among yourselves, for Charity shall cover the multitude of sins, i. e. it shall stand you in more stead at the Great day, than any other Duties.* 1 Pet. 4. 8. *And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three, all Chief and Cardinal Graces, but the greatest of these is Charity.* 1 Cor. 13. 13. Thus are Love, and Peace, and Unity, the very top of Christian Duties, and the most edifying things in all private Persons; so that they are first to be secured, and must not be parted with in hopes thereby to improve in any others.

Nay, without them we cannot edifie in any others to any purpose. For if we throw aside Charity, which seeks not her own, but has a care of other Men, v. 5. (and that care of others, as he declared † just before, will keep out Schism) the greatest Proficiency in Knowledge, or other Virtues, is unprofitable and useles.

† 1 Cor. 14. 1.
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† 1 Cor. 12. v. 25.

useless. We have no profit at all by *Knowledge*, or other accomplishments of our Understandings. *Tho I have the gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and have all Knowledge, and the Tongues of Men and Angels, and Faith to remove Mountains, if after all I have no Charity; it profits me nothing.* 1 Cor. 13. 1, 2. Nay, we have no profit by the bravest Actions, but even the best and costliest things we do, (a sad Case, God knows) are thrown away, and will not avail to save us. *Tho I am Heroically liberal in Alms, and, leaving my self naked, bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor; yea, tho I die for Religion, and give my Body to be burned a Martyr; yet, if I have not Charity, it profits me nothing.* v. 3. So true was that Observation of the Primitive Christians, that *wilful Schism*, that consummate Breach of Charity and Union, is the same among other Virtues, that the Dead Fly is among the Costliest Oyntments; it will mar all that any man doth, and is not to be expiated by any thing, no not by Martyrdom. * *Schismaticks*, says St. Cyprian, *tho they are slain for confessing Christ, yet is the stain of Schism so deep, their very Blood cannot wash it out. It is an inexpressible Crime, from which a man cannot be purged, though he dies for Christ. — Let him give himself to fry in the Flames, or be tore in pieces by Wild Beasts; that shall not crown his Faith with Victory, but pass only for the Punishment of his Treachery. — He may be slaughter'd, but he shall not be Crown'd. — For he cannot be one of Christs Martyrs, who is not one of the Churches Members.*

* *Tales etiam si occisi in confessione nominis fuerint, macula ista nec sanguine abluitur. Inexpiables & Gravis culpa Discordie, nec Passione purgatur. — Ardeant licet flammis & ignibus tradite, vel objecti Bestiis animas suas ponant; non erit illa fidei corona, sed Pene Perfidie, &c. — Occidi talis potest, coronari non potest. — Esse Martyr non potest, qui in Ecclesia non est.* Cyp. de Unit. Eccles. p. 113, 114. Ed. Ox.

Thus are Charity, Peace and Unity, the most excellent, and edifying things in every private Christian; nay, of that necessity, that no other Gifts or Graces, not the deepest Knowledge, nor the noblest Alms, nor Martyrdom it self, are of any use, or able to profit us without them. So that when to edifie in other Duties, Men transgress them, they give away more than they get, and are not so truly advanced forward as set back, and so cannot pretend to go on in Private Edification.

But besides that they are thus really made worse as Private Christians, I observe,

2. That if they were as much improved, as really they are hindered, yet would it by no means be lawful for them to make a *Schism*, and break the Peace and Unity of the Church to be better edi-

sed: For though it be well, that Men should seek to edifie and profit themselves in particular Virtues, and do this with care, seeking after the best means; yet at the same time it is equally true also, that in so doing they must secure the Peace and Edification of the whole Church. They must not be so zealous for any means of better edifying and profiting themselves, as for its sake to make a Rent in the Church, and create Publick Disturbance.

And this may appear from these Reasons.

1. Because it is against the Fundamental Law of all Societies, which is, That no Man shall seek his own Private Profit and Enrichment, by the Publick Loss and Dissettlement. And particularly, 'tis against the Laws Christ has made for the Peace and Preservation of his Church, who engages his Members to forego their own Private Profit for the Publick Peace and Benefit, more than any others.

2. This breaking Unity to redress and supply less edifying Means in the Church, is like Sedition in the State for Redress of Civil Defects and Grievances, and subject to a like Condemnation.

3. 'Tis against the End even of the best Helps and Means of Edification, which is to establish Peace and keep out Schism, and so are utterly perverted when they are made the Ground of Separation.

4. When the Corinthians broke the Unity of the Church on this Ground, the Apostle charg'd the great Sin of Schism upon them.

5. If this Pretence would acquit from Schism, there can be no such thing as Unity in the Church, nor any stop to Separation.

1. I say, thus to break Unity and Publick Peace, only that we may have better means to edifie and profit our selves in private virtues, is against the Fundamental Law of all Societies, which is, That no Man shall seek his own private profit and enrichment, by the publick loss and dissettlement.

The Publick Interest in all reason deserves to be more regarded, than any Mans Private Benefit. For it is infinitely of greater weight, and contains more in it: So that if any private profiting may claim to be pursued, the publick much more, wherein every single Mans share weighs as much as that, and has the vast number of all the rest added to it. And the subsistence of all society and good order requires it should be so prefer'd, since otherwise it would evermore be some Mans turn, for his own particular profits sake, to break it. And when any Men embody, and combine in Societies, by so doing they all virtually in-

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gage, and profess to do it. And in all Communities he really is, and is generally held an ill Man, who doth otherwise. He is a bad Member in a Family, that will please himself in some unmeet or unseasonable delight, to the disturbance of the whole Household. And he is an ill Man in any Neighbourhood, and a bad Subject in any Country, who will seek his own private gain and emolument, tho it be at the general loss, and when the Publick suffers by it. It is ill in any Member, for some private end, to bring any Detriment to the Publick; but especially to make Seditions, and break the Peace and Unity, which is the Ligation by which it stands, for that is the Civil Death and Dissolution of it.

But as this is against the Fundamental Law of all Communities; so particularly against the Laws Christ has made for the Peace and Preservation of his Church, who obliges his Members to forgoe their own Private Profit for Publick Peace and Benefit, more than any others. He puts us in mind, that we stand in his Church, not as independent individuals, who have only our own gain to look to, but as Parts and Members.—*God has made us the Body of Christ*, says St. Paul, and Members in particular, 1 Cor. 12. 27. And being Fellow-members, he would have that beget in us a general care of all that are the same Body with us, making us sensible, not only of our own, but of others wants, and ready to denie our selves, or forgoe our own pleasure or profit, for their advantage. *If one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or if one be honoured, saith he, all the rest rejoyce with it*, v. 26. *And the Members should have the same care one of another*, v. 25. *and let no Man seek his own, but every Man anothers wealth*, 1 Cor. 10. 24. And this looking beyond our selves, and having a mutual care of others, will keep us from all Schisms, and dividing the Church for our particular satisfaction or advantage. *When the Members have the same care one of another, there will be no Schism in the Body*, v. 25. Among all the Duties he has enjoined, he lays greatest weight, as I have observed, on those which make for Love and Peace, so that they must be secured in the first place: they are set as the Ruling Virtues, which must give Laws; which utterly excludes all Plea of breaking them, upon pretence of Greater Profiting in any others: In Religious Matters, says the Apostle, *let us follow after the things which make for Peace, and things whereby one may edifie*

another. Rom. 14. 19. *Above all things, says he again, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness: i. e. which by binding us together perfects us, for all other Graces are imperfect, as I before noted, without Unity and Peace, and it must be added to them to gain acceptance. Col. 3. 14. And let the Peace of God rule in your Hearts, whereto you are also called in one Body: i. e. of all others Peace must give Laws, and be the Ruling Virtue, because it secures that which is the greatest Profit, and most to be aim'd at in all Societies, viz. Unity. v. 15.*

Thus are Men in all Societies, and the Members of Christ's Church more than any, obliged to be most tender of Publick Benefit and Peace, and to deny themselves in any Private Interests and Advantages, rather than in pursuit of them, to break Unity and work Publick Disturbance. When they are Members of Publick Bodies they must have Publick Spirits, and not seek their own Benefit against the Benefit of the Community. So that if any man seeks only to please himself, and to carry on his own Profit and Satisfaction, he can only be Good then, when there is none in the World besides himself, and he lives alone, but is an ill man, and an awkward mis-form'd Member in all Society and Communion.

2. *This breaking Unity to redress and supply less edifying Means in the Church, is like Sedition in the State for redress of Civil Defects and Grievances, and subject to a like Condemnation.*

What *Sedition* is in the *Civil State*, that *Schism* is in the *Church of Christ*. It breaks one Society into many Pieces, and makes them no longer one Body, but so many several Bodies as there are disjoynted Parties. And therefore *Church-Schisms* are call'd *Seditions*, both by *St. Paul*—*the Works of the Flesh are Heresies, Seditions, i. e. Heresies and Schisms, Gal. 5. 20:* and by *St. Clement* ordinarily, and other *Apostolical Writers*.

And when this is made in any Church for Means of better Edification, because the established Helps happen to have some Defects, and are not so fitted to our Profit as we would have them: it is such another way of Redress, as when a Sedition is made in a State, to remedy the Defects and Grievances of any Kingdom. In both which, as the Remedy is most *sinful*, being such an high and open Breach of Peace, which God has made the most sacred of all Duties: so is it withal most foolish, and a way of Cure incomparably worse than the Disease. For surely
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the tearing Things to pieces, is the worst way of mending Faults; and Sedition, and the utter loss of Peace, are among the worst of Grievances that can befall any Communities.

3. 'Tis against the End even of the best Helps and Means of Edification, which is to establish Peace, and keep out Schism; and so are utterly perverted when they are made the Ground of Separation.

As for Private Graces and Improvements themselves, the Exercise even of them is oft-times subject to this End, and they are always best and most perfect, when they are so used, as that we may not only profit our selves with them, but edifie the Church too. Love and Peace are the Ruling Virtues, as I have shew'd, which must guide the rest, and the Great End whereto all others must be made subservient. This Rule St. Paul gives the *Corinthians* for the management of themselves in other Duties—*Let all your things be done with Charity*; so that even other Duties are in danger of losing their Grace, when they are exercised uncharitably. 1 Cor. 16. 14. And the Exercise of Devotion, even in inspired Prayers and Hymns when Men were acted by them, he tells them must be with deference to Peace and Publick Edification. Every one, saith he, hath a Psalm, but let all things be done to edifying. 1 Cor. 14. 26.

But as for all the outward Means and Helps of Edifying in these Private Graces, they are more absolutely subservient to Peace, and must be so used for profiting Private Men, as that they be sure at the same time to edifie the whole Church, and maintain Union.

These Means of Edification, are either those Publick Officers God has appointed in his Church, or those Gifts he bestows upon them for the Edification of Believers. And tho it be a great Design of both these, to edifie particular Persons in Faith, and Practice; yet is it an higher End to edifie the whole Church in Peace and Unity, and keep out Schisms.

1. This Edification of the whole Church, and preserving Peace and Unity, is the main End of Gifts. Thus we are told of Knowledge, which St. Paul rejects when it is used only to build up and please our selves, and is not govern'd by Charity that edifies others. 1 Cor. 8. 1. And thus also of Prophecy or Preaching, that great Means of Edifying Believers. For tho it was then an extraordinary and inspired Gift, yet was it to be limited by Publick Ends, and the Spirit of Prophecy to be stinted and

and suppressed, when it came unseasonably upon them in the Church, and, by moving several to speak at the same time, bred confusion and Publick disturbance. *The Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets*, i. e. to govern them in subserviency to the Churches Peace: *For God is not the Author of Confusion*, i. e. he bestows no Gifts to serve that end, but of Peace, as in all Churches of the Saints, 1 Cor. 14. 32, 33. And to name no more in this case, St. Paul, as I have shewed, makes *Charity*, that uniting Virtue, and sure obstacle of all Schisms, the most & excellent of all Gifts. So that when the gifted Men themselves are zealous to exercise their Gifts, or others are zealous to be under them; they must both have a higher zeal to shew their Charity, and maintain it in the first place. *Follow after Charity*, says he again, *and desire Spiritual Gifts*: So that in all exercise and pursuit of them, they must not fail to follow Love, and take it along with them. 1 Cor. 14. 1.

2. It is also the great end of those *Officers*, whom God has appointed and empowered, and whom he has endowed with these Gifts for the edification of his Church; such as *Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers*. For they are given, says St. Paul, for the perfecting of the Saints, and the edifying of the Body of Christ. Eph. 4. 11, 12. They are given for the perfecting of the Saints, i. e. for the edifying particular Christians in Faith and Practice: but yet so as to be given also for the edifying of the Body of Christ, till we come in the Unity of the Faith to a perfect Man. So that when these Officers seek to edify particular Believers, they must be sure at the same time to secure another end, i. e. the edification of the Body, and Unity of the Church. They are given as *Members*, which shews evidently they must make up but one Body, and keep Unity with the other parts: Nay, they are given as *joyns*, which are the very Ligaments of Union and Compactness.

These Officers are given as *Members of the Church*, and that shews they must make up one Body, and keep Unity with the other parts. For the Unity of the Body is to be the care of all the Members, especially of those which excel in Gifts, or are highest in Dignity and Office. Thus it is, as the Apostle observes, 1 Cor. 12. in the *Natural Body*. It has several Members very different in endowments, and destined, some to more, some to less honourable Offices. But because of this difference, the
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more able and honourable Members do not set up for themselves, and seek a Separate Profit or applause, or make a Schism, and divide from others. Tho there be many Members, says he, they all make up but one Body. v. 20. And the Eye, tho a more Honourable Member, cannot separate Interests, or say to the Hand (tho less Honourable) I have no need of thee: nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you. v. 21. And none seek only themselves, which would cause Divisions; but they have all the same care one for another, if one suffer, all the rest suffering; or if one be honoured, all the rest rejoicing with it; that there be no Schism in the Body. v. 25, 26. And like to this in Natural Bodies, is the difference of Officers in the Church. Tho that have variety of Gifts, as Wisdom, Knowledge, Prophecy, Faith, Miracles, &c. v. 8, 9, 10. And variety of Officers and Ministers, some gifted more, some less; some higher, some lower in Authority than others: for there are differences of Administrations, v. 5; God having set first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that Miracles, and Gifts of Healing, i. e. Persons endowed with them, Helps (i. e. some distributing Charity, as Deacons, or attending on Impotent and Orphans) Governments as Bishops and Presbyters, Diversities of Tongues. v. 28. Tho, I say, in the Church there be this difference, both of Gifts and Ministries; yet must not those differently Gifted or Authorized Officers draw different ways, and form divided Parties, but all aim at the Unity of the whole Body as its Natural Members. As all the Members in the Body Natural are one Body; so also is Christ, the different Ministeries and Members making but one Body in him likewise. v. 12: And the several Ministeries, as Apostles, Prophets, &c. are all the Body of Christ, says he, and Members in particular, which therefore must cement together, and not fall off and divide from each other. v. 27, 28. And, as we have many Members in one Body Natural, and yet all these Members, though the Body be but one, have not one and the same Office, more than these Members of the Church: So we being many Members and Officers (the variety whereof is described, v. 6, 7, 8.) are still to be but one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another (the difference in Offices giving no more liberty to divide the Church, than the same difference in the Natural Members doth to divide the Natural Body) Rom. 12. 4, 5.

Nay these Officers are not set only as *Members*, which, as we have seen, is enough to prevent Schism; but they are *set in the Church as joynts*, which are to compact all the other parts, and are the very Bonds and Ligaments of Union. *The whole Body, says St. Paul, is joynted together, and compacted by that which every joynt supplies.* Eph. 4. 16. Every joynt, i. e. Every Officer and Church-governour; for in them the other Members are joynted and united to one another. And since they are joynts, they must fasten and unite all the other parts together, not tear them from each other; what *they supply*, says the Apostle, must compact the Body, and therefore must in no wise divide it, and of one make many. So that as for the extraordinary Abilities, and edifying power of some Pastors and Teachers, it must never occasion or head Schisms and Divisions. But must be so applied by them, and so sought to by others; that whilst it labours to build up Faith and Good Life in particular Persons, at the same time it build up Unity in the Church and Body of Christ. When an increase is endeavoured, by the effectual working in every part; that must be in such measure, as the Apostle says again, as secures the whole Body, and consists with Publick Peace and settlement. *The effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the Body to the edifying it self in Love.* Eph. 4. 16.

4. When the Corinthians broke the Unity of the Church on this pretence of greater profiting, the Apostle charges the great sin of Schism upon them.

Under their Divisions they had this to plead, that the common means were unedifying, and that the Publick Assemblies were not so ordered, as that they might receive the greatest profit by them. *When they came together, every one had a new inspired Psalm, or a Doctrine, or a Revelation, or an Interpretation; the uttering whereof all at once bred nothing but confusion, and was not, as he says, a doing things unto edifying.* 1 Cor. 14. 26. They were generally so forward to shew their Gifts of Tongues, that every one in the Assembly that could, was for uttering a Prayer, or Revelation, or an Exposition in a strange Language. And this made their understanding Unfruitful unto others, v. 14. So that the unlearned, not understanding what was said, could not say Amen at their giving of thanks, v. 16; that the Speaker only edified himself, v. 4; but that the Congregation was not edified. v. 17.

Nay,

Nay, there was then, not only much unedifyingness in their Publick Assemblies, but they divided on this pretence, to associate themselves with more edifying Teachers. They were Zealous, as my Text says, of *Spiritual Gifts*, and mighty admirers of Gifted Men, but very prone to slight others, who were inferior to them. They were all for setting up the most powerful and edifying Pastors—they gloried in Men. 1 Cor. 3. 21. They would flock to those they most admired, where they thought to edify most, and become their followers, but separate from others—they were puffed up for one against another. 1 Cor. 4. 6. Yea, for the sake of their admired Teachers, they would disparage even St. Paul himself, alledging that he was *rude in speech*, i. e. made less elegant, clear, and Edifying Sermons; and less gifted, than some other more followed Ministers, 2 Cor. 11. 4. 6: which put him upon speaking so much in his own defence and commendation, as he doth, 2 Cor. c. 11. and c. 12. For so he excuses all that glorying, and setting forth his own Praises—I am become a fool in glorying, but by such unjust preferring them above me, ye have compelled me. 2 Cor. 12. 11. But when they broke the Unity of the Church, and burst thus into Strife and Division to set up the most Powerful Gifted Men, and seek better means of edifying: he tells them they are guilty of the great sin of Schism. *Whereas there are among you these Divisions, tho shelter'd under these pretences, ye are Carnal, and walk as Men.* 1 Cor. 3. 3.

5. And lastly, *If this Pretence of Edifying better by the Rent they make, be a good and warrantable Reason for it, there can be no such thing as Unity in the Church, nor any stop to Separations.* For this Pretence will serve almost all men, and that almost at all times, to break loose, so that no fast hold can be taken of them in any Church. If the Rule be, to break off from others, and still to unite with that Teacher by whom he edifies most: the next Question is, Who shall judge who that is; and that must be every man for himself, for every man seems best able to tell his own Gains by what he finds, and one is not a fit Judge of anothers Profit. And when every man must seek a Teacher whom he fancies most, tho in opposition to such as the Law has appointed; since mens Fancies are infinitely various in this Point, how can there be any Bond of Union in any Neighbourhood? For one is most pleas'd with melting Tones, and Voice,

and Vehemence; another with pretty Sayings, choice Similitudes, and affected Allegories, thinking there lies much Spirituality in affecting Phrases; a third thinks Figures and Phrases only amuse the Fancy, but darken Knowledge, and is for hearing Weighty and Useful things deliver'd in Intelligible and Plain Discourses. In Sermons, some seek witty Conceits, and Resemblances; others, ostentation of Learning in citation of Authors, and *Greek* and *Latin* Sentences: Some again think lightly of both these, and seek more to be inform'd in Deep and Mysterious Points, or to be fed with Discoveries of new Notions; others, to hear a clear State of hard Cases; a third prefers the most pathetical, moving Preachers; a fourth is for the subtlest Disputants, who shew most Dexterity and Skill in Controversies. Thus various are Mens Judgments in these things. And therefore, if every Man be at liberty to chuse that Preacher, by whom he edifies most in what he fancies best, there is not like to be any settled Union in Parishes or Churches. Nay, the same Man will not be at unity with himself at different times. For Mens Humours, and Opinions of these Matters daily alter; and when they change, by this Rule they must also change their Teachers; and so are never like to be true and constant, even to their own admired Congregations. If Men then are free to leave the Establish'd Ministry, and adhere to any whom they think they can hear more profitably; 'tis plain the Church can be no such thing, as the *Scripture* every where * declares it is, viz. *One Body*.

And thus upon all these Accounts it appears, that the Edification and Unity of the Church must be preferr'd, and sought in the first place, and limit us in seeking out the best Means and Helps of Edifying in Particular Virtues. So that we must never seek to supply supposed Defects, and get better Means of Private Edifying by a Schism. We may labour after them as we can in all Peaceable ways; but must in no wise for their sakes break the Unity of the Church, and make Divisions. For this, as I have shewn, is against the Fundamental Law of all Communities, which forbids Men to seek their own Private Profit at the Publick Loss; it is against the Fundamental Laws of Christs Church, who engages all his Members to deny themselves, and forego their Private Profit for Publick Peace, and to be careful of it before all other Duties; it is like raising Sedition.

dition in the Civil State for Redress of Grievances, which is a most Foolish, as well as Sinful Course; it is an utter perverting of the true End of all Helps and Means of Edifying, whose main Design is to maintain Peace and prevent Schisms; it makes Separation endless, and renders it impossible that there should be any such thing as Unity in the Church; and when Men have divided the Church on this Pretence, they have been charged with the great Sin of Schism in the Scriptures. So that in seeking the best Means of Private Edification, every Good Man must stop in Peaceable Ways, which are the onely Ways that are Innocent; yea, and the Ways that are best too, all things consider'd, and the Benefit of Peace being cast into the Scales, tho some others should happen to be better when consider'd abstractly in themselves. And therefore no Conscientious or Wise Man, must ever attempt to procure a Means more edifying to himself by Separation.

From this it may plainly appear, how unwarrantably our Dissenting Brethren act in Separating from us, whom they confess to be a *sound* and *lawful* Church, upon pretence that they can edify more in Separate Meetings. To satisfy them wherein, it may be very fit to consider,

1. *Whether that is indeed true, which is supposed by them, viz. That their Preaching is in it self fitter than ours is for edification.* It is an invidious thing to make Comparisons, especially when they are to commend our selves: but we may very innocently, and inoffensively admonish them, to examine this Point well before they pronounce thus of it: Do they come to hear us, before they complain of the unedifyingness of our Sermons? And if they come at all, is it only now and then by fits, or often, if not constantly, for so long at least, till they have heard all the Parts, and so can comprehend the whole Design, and bear away the Connexion of our Discourses? And when they are at Church, do they give diligent heed, and attend to what we say? And in attending, do they hear us without prejudice against our Persons, and a design to find faults, and pick up something to complain of? Yea, what is more, do they hear us, as I presume they do their own Teachers, with Reverence and composed Thoughts, which greatly prepare the Mind to profit and edify by any Discourses, and which, tho sometimes perhaps undeserved by the Preachers skill and eloquence, are yet always most due to the Religion and Solemnity

nity of the Service, and are Tempers that all Men ought to put on, whilst others are speaking to them in Gods Name, and delivering his Message? And after they have heard, do they give themselves the trouble to make what they heard their own, and apt to stick by them and affect them, by meditating upon it; and applying it to themselves, and so bringing it close to their own Consciences? Without this Honesty and Impartiality, and Godly care in hearing, they would not be edified if the Holy Ghost himself were to preach to them; and when Christ himself was upon Earth, his Sermons were unprofitable, and did not edify the generality of his Hearers, for the want of them: and if they are in the same fault in hearing us, no wonder they are little edified by our Preaching. And after all this, when they pass Sentence, by what Rule do they try the profitableness of our Discourses? Do they judge a Sermon edifying, only as it speaks according to their Opinion; or insists most on some things, and delivers them in such forms of speech as most please them; or is full only of the glorious Priviledges of the Saints (which, though fit to be treated of sometimes, must not ingross all our Discourses, or be more insisted on than those Duties which are to secure them to us,) and gives comfortable intimations that they are all theirs, which may feast their Fancies with the delightful Thoughts, of their being more precious and dear to God than others? Do they judge it to be edifying, I say, only from such things as these; or as it answers the foregoing Description of Edification? Do they hear Discourses of weightier matters, or more plain and intelligible Accounts, less darkned with Phrases and Metaphors, or stronger Reasons for any Doctrines, or clearer Explications of any Duties, or more perspicuous and careful states of any Cases, or wiser Directions for any Points of Practice, or more forcible Motives to ingage to the use of them, or more satisfactory Solutions of any important Questions and Doubts of Conscience in the Separate Meetings, than they might hear in the Parish Churches? If they try the Point by these Measures, 'tis like they will not be so forward to pronounce against us, nor talk so much of the edification of their own Preachers, and the want of it in ours.

2. *If, as they suppose, their Sermons were siter than ours are for edification, yet are not they sure to edify more by them.* For we

we are but the Means and Instruments, but the Effect of all proceeds from Gods Blessing. *We are only Ministers*, says St. Paul, *by whom you believed. I have planted, and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase*, 1 Cor. 3. 5, 6. And we are most sure of Gods Blessing, when we keep in Gods own way, and wait upon him in those Means which he has allotted us. For God is wont to bless most his own Appointments; and that not only when they best answer the end of their Institution, and are most useful and edifying; but even when they are degenerated, and edifie less; and accordingly our Saviour referred Men to them, when that was really the Case. The *Scribes and Pharisees* in his time, were far from the most edifying Teachers; being both wicked and ignorant, two most unedifying Qualities. They were *Blind Guides*, Mat. 23. 16; and *bad Livers*, being full of *Vain Glory, Rapine, and Hypocrisie*, &c. v. 5, 6, 14. But yet unedifying as they were, since they *sat in Moses Seat*, he refers the *Jews* to their *Ministry*, to expect the Blessing of God in their due attendance upon it. v. 2, 3. The *Priests* in those Days, by the *Scripture-accounts* of them, were far from the Holiest Men; so that if the Holiness of him that brings it be any recommendation of the Gift, they were not in themselves the fittest to present an Offering. But yet, because they were the Means of Gods appointing, when the *Leper was cleansed*, and was to return God an *Oblation*, Christ orders him to carry it *to the Priest*, because thro his Hands God would accept it of him. Mat. 8. 4. Thus is Gods Blessing, which is the great cause of our profiting, to be looked for in Gods own ways, and in attendance upon the means which he has allotted us; and we have not a like reason to expect it when we reject them, especially if we run into a plain Breach of that Unity and Good Order he has established in his Church, in pursuit of others. And when Gods Blessing goes along with them, we shall edifie more by weaker means; so that a more edifying Sermon in an unedifying way, such as *Schism* is, is not so like to profit us. But

3. If they could edifie more by them, yet is it in no wise lawful thus to break the Unity and Peace of the Church for better Edification. There is no breaking Publick Peace, as we have seen, for better means of Private Profiting: so that no
Man

Man must ever seek to edifie in Schism, or to grow in Grace by joyning in Separation.

And thus I have explained the *Nature of Edification*, and shewn what Improvements it implies; viz. *Any increase in Private Virtues, or in Publick Settlement and Peace.* So that then any Man *edifies in Religion*, when he is *bettered in any Point of Faith or Manners, or made more complying with innocent Publick Constitutions, and a more peaceable Member of the Church.*

And having thus shewn what it implies, I am now

2. *To press it as the Great Point whereat they are to aim, on all sorts of Christians.*

And here had I time, I should urge all *Christians* to lay out themselves in improving useful Knowledge, and obedient Practice, and peaceable Inclinations; to stir up and cherish in themselves devout Affections, and daily renew and strengthen Holy Purposes, and express in the whole course of their Lives the power of Godliness, in all due submission to their Governours, and tender care of the Churches Peace, as well as in all Duty towards God, and exercise of Private Virtues. For this is truly to grow in Grace, and be edified Believers.

I would intreat you, my *Reverend Brethren*, in the Name of Christ, whose *Ministers* we are, not only to be exemplary and shining Lights in edifying thus your selves; but also to be wise and unwearied in your Labours, in carrying on this Edification among all others you can any ways work upon, especially those committed to your Charge. That you would instruct the ignorant with all assiduitie and plainness; convince the erroneous, with all gentleness and calm arguings, yea with all Patience and Perseverance, remembering that it is an hard matter, and a work of time, for a Man to cast off old and rivited Opinions, and that any one is troubled enough in being shewed his error, without hearing of it in Anger and Invective Speeches; and labour to win all Men over to an universal Holiness with your utmost skill and diligence. That you would study to be plain, and useful in all your Sermons: Prudently bold, and impartial in Reproofs; warning Men against all, even their beloved Vices, with such freedom, as may keep their Consciences awake, and yet with such shew of tenderness and prudent timing of Reproof, as may not tempt them to fly out from us: endeavouring to reclaim them from Schism, which

which is most mischievous to the Church, and which nothing can excuse before God but an honest Ignorance, and the pitiable-ness of unmasterable Prepossessions; and from all Prophane-ness and Immoralities, which, without particular Repentance and Amendment, are most surely mischievous to their own Souls, which have no Plea of Pardonable Ignorance and Involuntariness, and for which there is no Excuse at all. In all which, by the Love of Christ I would beseech you, to shew all Wisdom, and Diligence, and Patience, and unwearied Perseverance, and compassionate Tenderness and Love for Souls.

I would in all Christian Love beseech our *Dissenting Brethren*, and be instant with them, since it so nearly concerns both the Church and them, that they would seek no longer to build up only themselves; but to edifie the Church of Christ, which they certainly pull down by their Separation.

In very deed they may have great Means of Private Edification in our Church, and need not seek for better in any other Place. They will edifie sufficiently by our *Sermons*, as I have noted, if they bring along with them prepared Minds; and and without them the *Jews* could not edifie by the Sermons of Christ and his *Apostles*. And if they cannot edifie by the *Churches Prayers* too, the Fault, I am sure, is not in the *Prayers*, but in *themselves*. For consider, Brethren, the Prayers we use are not to give Affections to us, but to express those we have; so that when we come to Pray, we must bring them along with us. And if we come with an awful sense of God in our Minds, with serious and good Purposes, and devout Affections; we need no better Helps to express them, than the Churches Service. For therein are found, suitable, and well-composed Prayers, which extend to all Necessities, begging all needful Graces, and praying particularly both against Sins and Calamities, and requesting outward Blessings, and giving Thanks for Receipt of Mercies, and interceding for all States and Conditions of Persons, and suited to the Great Periods and States of Life. In all which they pitch upon the most pertinent, and proper things; and express them in Grave, Plain, and Significant Language; and are intermixed with *Responses* to fix Attention, and call back wandring Thoughts; and are parcel'd into Collects to give Breath, and not weary us out with an uninterrupted continuance of intense Affections. So that
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if we bring with us a Heart to desire these things, here we have Prayers to suggest, and express our Desires of them ; yea, such, as whilst they do express, are greatly fitted to increase them. Thus fit are they to edifie in themselves, and this great Numbers of truly Pious and Devout Souls have found, and from their own Experience can testifie concerning them. And now, if any shall still charge such excellent Prayers as unedifying ; where lies the blame ? whether in the Deadness of the Prayers, or the Indevotion and Unpreparedness of their own Hearts ? If a Man thinks the most wholesom and substantial Food distasteful or insipid, 'tis a sign he has a depraved Appetite. And if he feels no Devotion in the use of such Pious, Wise, and Profitable Forms, 'tis a sign his Soul is sick, and that his Spiritual Sense has lost its Taste, since the most agreeable Food is no better relish'd by it. He is Indevout, not because the Prayers do not suggest Devout things, nor cloath them in Proper and Devout Expressions ; but because he doth not hold his Mind attent, or has not prepared his Heart to be affected with them. So that if these our Brethren will take the Godly Care and Pains to mend this Fault which is in themselves, and come with Reverent and Prepared Minds ; they will not, I believe, complain any longer of Deadness and want of Edification in the Churches Prayers, which are not only Good, but, as those who use them without prejudice, and with Devotion in their Hearts can testifie, very excellent for that purpose.

But tho they could not so well edifie themselves in them ; yet, by the Love of Christ I would beseech them, to seek no longer to build up only themselves ; but to edifie the Church of Christ, which they pull down by their Separation. Make Conscience of Peace and Unity, Brethren, and think them as Necessary things, as any others in Religion. Remember it is one of the necessary Properties of Charity to have such care of others as keeps out Schism ; and that without this Charity there is no Benefit in any Services, no not in Martyrdom : and how then can you account to your selves the throwing that away, for any other thing ? Esteem your selves as Members of the Body, and consider that the Body is built up by Unity. This Christ has founded upon himself, and the Apostles, those Master Builders, have edified, by compacting it into one : and how then will you look either upon him or them, who pluck asunder

asunder what they put together, and pull it down by Division? The Design of God in all the most Powerful Gifted Ministers, is to build up the Body, and keep out Schism: and what account will you give to him for crossing that Design, in making these not only the Heads of Parties, but the Pretence of Separation? If you had lived in *Corinth*, when Men separated, as you do here, to follow more Gifted Guides, would not you have returned again to the Unity of the Church upon the Apostle's Admonition? And why then should you not do the same now, upon this Intimation, that his Reproof reaches you, as much as it did them? The Way of Separation, my Brethren, is a most unedifying Course; for Unity builds up, but Schism destroys the Church, and all Societies. So that if you would edifie the Church, which is Christ's Spouse; if you will be at any pains to build it up, as he was at the pains to die for it; it must be in the way of Peace, and by submitting to any thing, which you think may be done with a safe Conscience (as this Plea it self shews you do think in our Case, it being against our Way only because, as you say, less Edifying, not because of any Unlawfulness) rather than upon account thereof to divide, and form separate Parties.

I would exhort you the *Church-wardens* to be careful of edifying, not only as Private Christians, but also in the faithful discharge of your Oaths, (considering that Perjury has in it a most horrible Guilt) and in the Duties of your Places. That when you endeavour to suppress Vices, you would be impartial, and intire in such endeavours; considering, that all Notorious Swearing, Drunkenness, and Immoralities, as well as staying away from Church; and that all staying away out of Irreligion and Carelessness, as well as out of Scruples and pretence of Conscience, is equally a matter of your Oath, and a Point wherein you may do God, and the Souls of Men Service. The *Church-wardens* swear, indeed, to discharge this only according to the best of their Knowledge; but then they must use a competent endeavour to know it, and this is no warranty at all to affect Ignorance; and much less to pass over what they do know, in negligence, or connivance. And many, it may be of those that fail, would discharge it so far as they know, were it not that they are afraid to anger, and displease their Neighbours. But 'tis most unreasonable any

Man should be angered with them for performing their Oaths, and discharging a Good Conscience. Can any Man, if he has left the Conscience, have left the Modesty withal so far, as to desire them to forswear themselves, and destroy their own Souls to do him a kindness? Or will any Man that is Conscientious, and stays from Church out of Conscience, take it ill that they should be tender of their Consciences as well as he is of his, and dread the horrid Sin of Perjury, the greatest wound to a Good Conscience? They have no liberty of Connivance, being bound up by Oaths; so that if any favour and indulgence be expected, it must not be from them, but at higher Hands. And therefore no Man, in any Reason or Modesty, can be angered at them for acting faithfully according to their Oaths. But if any be; that Anger at Men for performing Oaths and a Good Conscience, is nothing less than frightening them from their Duty, and laying Stumbling-Blocks before others, and putting the Burden of the Cross on Good Mens Shoulders for good Actions, which has so many Woes denounced to it in the Scriptures. And as for the *Church-wardens* themselves, when they incur any Displeasure or Malice of Men on this account, they may encourage themselves with this, that therein they suffer for Righteousness sake, and endure the Cross for keeping a Good Conscience, wherein they may comfortably commit themselves to God, expecting, that either his Providence will prevent any ill effects, or infinitely make them up to them afterwards, because they have thus exposed themselves only to be faithful in his Service.

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